

STAKE A HOMESTEAD*

In 1862 Congress passed the Homestead Act. A United States citizen twenty-one years old could file a claim on 160 acres of public land which he wished to own as a home for himself and his family. If he lived there for five years, had built a house and was raising crops, he was given title to the land.

The country was wild, the problems faced by the "sod-busters" were great. Many homesteaders gave up before five years had passed. Every one who succeeded did so through sheer determination and by using every skill or handicraft he could master.

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A game for 2 to 6 players.

Equipment:

This game consists of 6 "Land Tracts" and a deck of picture cards.

The Land Tract is a drawing of open prairie land and has spaces designated for 8 picture cards which are used to "prove up" and build a homestead, thus "gaining title" and winning the game.

The playing cards are of 5 kinds:

1. Proving Cards, which are placed on tract as designated.
2. Disaster Cards, which cause player to lose Proving Cards.
3. Skill Cards, which are exchanged at Trading Post.
4. Trading Post Cards, picturing items obtainable there.
5. One "Claim Jumper," the villain of the game.

Rules:

1. Each player stakes his homestead by placing a Land Tract in front of him.

2. Playing cards are placed in the center of the table or playing area. The Trading Post cards are placed face up in one pile. All the other cards are placed face down. The five colors represent the five years of homesteading, and must be arranged in this order, with the first year, 1, green on top, then 2, pink; 3, blue; 4, orange; and 5, yellow.

3. Players draw in turn, taking top card from pile, and place Proving Cards on Land Tracts. If a duplicate Proving Card is drawn it is placed on top of first one; that is, a player may have more than one well or garden, etc.

4. Skill Cards are used as they direct, to obtain items from the Trading Post. The Trading Post Card is then placed in proper space on player's Tract, and the Skill Card is discarded face up on a discard pile beside the drawing pile.

5. A Disaster Card, when drawn, is placed face up on the discard pile, along with the Proving Card it controls. For example, when a player draws a Disaster Card that says, "Grasshoppers destroy your crops," he must pick up the crop cards from his Tract and discard them with the grasshopper card.

6. When the Claim Jumper card is drawn it is placed face up in the center of the player's Tract and must stay there until it is passed on to another player. When a player draws a card that says, "The Claim Jumper comes to your place," he must take the Claim Jumper card and put it on his Tract. A player who has the Claim Jumper continues to play in turn, but cannot win if the Claim Jumper is still on his Tract at the end of the game.

7. At the end of each of the first four "years", when the color changes, each player passes on one card from his Tract to the neighbor at his left. This card may be the Claim Jumper. Cards are not exchanged at end of fifth year.

8. A player must stay in the game through all five colors, which represent the five years a homesteader was required to stay. At the end of the game, if he has on his Land Tract a house, a crop, and at least four of the other six specified cards, he "gains title" and wins the game. It is possible for several players to win, or not any.